



Is NCC 'weaseling' out of promised rehabilitation?

Is it a road or is it a park?

The Office of Heritage and Environment (OH&E) set several conditions of consent before approving any race construction through the state-listed Coal River Precinct. Approval conditions included that the road through Camp Shortland would be turfed over immediately following every race and that the park must also be rehabilitated every year in accordance with the approved landscape plan. This section of track is never to be used as a road – understandable, since it bisects a large swathe of public parkland, rendering both sides too small for their previous uses. Before the road was constructed, sporting groups, families and community groups used the area for games, picnics and barbecues.

It seems Newcastle council is now trying to weasel out of restoring Camp Shortland to its previous state.

(NCC, not Supercars, is responsible for rehabilitation.)

In an online Newcastle Voice survey, NCC is asking Novocastrians if they want the road re-turfed or would they prefer some other option. This is in complete contravention of the conditions of consent. The OH&E has been notified, but we know from previous breaches of their conditions (like starting work in Coal River Precinct 22 days before actual approval was granted) that they have limited powers.

NCC obviously knows this too. Will NCC's overspend on the race infrastructure (much of which will have to be repaired now at extra cost), be at the expense of the reinstatement of premier parkland?



Scenic Newcastle could only be viewed through Supercars infrastructure

The East End community paid the price for someone else's party!

The so-called success of the Supercars event had little to do with any real benefits to Newcastle. Newcastle East provided the perfect backdrop for Supercars to showcase their brand and the brands of their sponsors. In return they took away our business and spread their noise, bitumen, cigarette butts, dust and fumes all over our beautiful East End.

While so many East Enders voted with their feet and left town to spend their dollars elsewhere, our civic leaders took advantage of the spectacle to be seen with the winners and network with the VIP's. A \$40,000 dollar event at Fort Scratchley was provided for the VIPS involved in promoting the event so they could congratulate each other. Unlike the punters below, they actually got a good view of the race.



Our civic leaders and government officials were available to hand out the prizes and witness the excitement of burning rubber, but they were less enthusiastic about acknowledging who was paying and why no compensation was available. Michael Paris made some attempt to acknowledge these costs in the Newcastle Herald:

"The costs of the party largely fell on residents who live close to the track



and East End business owners, including some who recounted horror stories of being pushed close to the brink after months of disruptions."

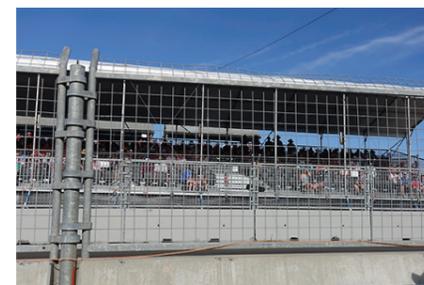
"Bars and restaurants further afield experienced a quieter-than-normal trading week-end as locals appeared to be scared off over the three days of the race."

'Scared off'? After months of traffic disruption and confusion, constant noise, anxiety and stress were locals really expected to relax and enjoy an event they had no say in? Supercars couldn't have chosen a more culturally-insensitive place to stage their race. East Enders are renowned for their love of heritage - cobblestones, sandstone, narrow streets, old houses and green parklands, passive recreation and surfing. Most of this was under concrete or behind wire fencing. Did fellow Novocastrians really expect East Enders to welcome those who desecrated our neighbourhood?

It will be a herculean task to convince East Enders to stay next year - and every year thereafter that the obnoxious Supercars is in town. As the community has long stressed - this is simply the wrong place for a motor race.



10:00 am on Supercars Saturday and local cafes near the precinct were almost empty.



Do the numbers stack up?

Supercars is a prolific user of what Crikey refers to as 'Major Event Mathematics', enabling 'magical multipliers to turn black holes into rivers of gold, and every taxpayer dollar reaps a plentiful harvest of happy tourists, eager investment and that all-important international exposure'.

Authorities are boasting that 192,000 people 'attended' the Newcastle 500. For those of us who stayed, that number seems ludicrous. Our own photos show small crowded pockets (including the paths in and out of the event precinct) and low to average numbers at the limited viewing areas around the track. During the 'finale' event, when you would expect crowds to be at their peak, many of the grandstands were only two-thirds full.



At various stages the event numbers have been quoted as 'tickets sold', 'tickets issued' and then Mr Warburton stated in The Herald 'numbers through the gates'. Each description is vastly different.

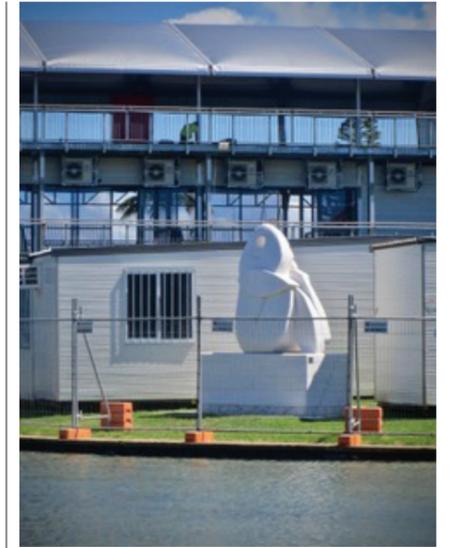
The attendance figures are important because they give Supercars major event status. The 'official' attendance figure proclaimed in the media is used to generate a key multiplier in any subsequent economic impact study – which they use to evaluate the event, rather than a cost-benefit analysis favoured by the Auditor-General. They do this because they can estimate the numbers of tourists and don't have to evaluate the costs to local businesses and residents. We know from Williams (2009) report on the Gold Coast



Supercars series that: "Of the 205,000 reported attendances at the event, 52% were spectators while the balance (48%) comprised a range of categories that included guests of sponsors and corporate clients, VIP, media, volunteers, race and support teams, officials, free-of-charge guests, and so on." In Newcastle the number of free tickets will be much higher because of the many thousands that were given to residents. Note that free ticket-holders are unlikely to be tourists. This explains why the CBD—right through to Cooks Hill and Honeysuckle—was dead on event nights and throughout the day.

Port Stephens had a spike in tourists though—most likely from Novocastrians escaping the race!

We have a lot of anecdotal evidence and press accounts – of how business was adversely impacted by the event. Photographs and video footage don't lie!



Resilience memorial statue: No room for trees.

Why did so many trees have to go?

Supercars fans complained of 'not enough shade' at the event. Sunburn red was the most predominant colour seen around the race precinct. Even up to the eleventh hour, trees were being removed. Our tally, from the arborist report and anecdotal evidence puts the number at 200. Since no changes to services were made along Fort Scratchley reserve, why did that avenue of trees get the chop? The answer, it seems, lies in the location of pop-up bars and viewing areas. How much better would the experience have been from the shade of the Norfolk Pines that were removed for the event?



Slip, slop, slap! Not applicable to some fans

In the Foreshore Park, more trees were removed days before the race to accommodate another pop-up bar and several generators.

At the beach tunnel entrance to Newcastle Beach, two more Norfolk Pines were removed to make way for the installation of the big screen.

One look at the photo above of the Resilience sculpture, hemmed in by race infrastructure reveals the true nature of the tree removal rationale. Trees make the Supercars set-up too complicated. Better to just get rid of them!